

# Research in Progress: *The Regional Chair*

Saturday 9 March 2019 at Conway Hall,  
Red Lion Square, London

This Research in Progress meeting was introduced by Chris Pickvance, who read extracts from a recent letter from Bill Cotton, recalling his early reflections on whether common furniture could be classified into regions, based on identifying makers' marks and the location of their workshops.

The meeting addressed the theme of the regional chair, with speakers presenting papers on a variety of forms and materials, contexts, time periods, geographical locations and research methods. 32 delegates attended. After each talk there was time for

questions and discussion. Conway Hall was a new venue for the Society, and the Brockway Room proved to be both spacious and convenient for access to a wide range of lunch opportunities.

The speakers have contributed the following summaries of their research:

## Stephen Jackson: *The caquetteuse form in seventeenth-century Scotland*

This paper presented research-in-progress on a project to record sixteenth and seventeenth-century Scottish furniture, with funding from the Royal Society of Edinburgh. One aim of the project is to establish the degree to which Scottish makers in this period were



Chair, Deeside, late seventeenth century. © Aberdeen University, ABDUA 18013

influenced by England, France and the Low Countries. A narrow-backed chair with trapezoidal seat and horizontally clasp arms was known to late nineteenth-century French collectors as the *caquetoire*, although twentieth-century scholars later established that this word had in the sixteenth century been applied to a different form of chair, with a low seat and lacking arms. Mutating into *caquetteuse* ('clucking woman', rather than 'gossiping-chair'), the term was quickly taken up in Britain around 1900 and most chairs that fit the formula are Scottish. The earliest of these were made in the 1590s and continued to be made in the North East of Scotland until the early eighteenth century. Both the geographical extent and chronological development of the type were charted. Although often associated with Aberdeen, the form was prevalent throughout eastern Scotland, and David Jones has shown how examples from Fife can be distinguished in their proportions and decoration. Not sufficiently well-known is the long vernacular after-life of the form in the North East, with many softwood examples made by joiners with limited skills and resources. The paper ended with a plea for more examples to be uncovered since the present-day location of a good third of those recorded in photographs since the 1890s remains unknown.